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THOMAS N. WAUL

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Of My first Brade Commander
in late War
John W. Hall

OF

GENERAL THOMAS NEVILLE WAUL.



SOUTHERN PUBLISHING COMPANY.
1880.





T. N. Waul

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

WAUL, GENERAL THOMAS NEVILLE—lawyer of ability and large experience—is a native of South Carolina, and now a resident of Galveston in the practice of his profession. His paternal ancestors at an early day immigrated to Virginia, and their descendants scattered thence through New Jersey and the Carolinas. They were among the early settlers of the Western States. The great grandfather of the subject of this sketch settled on the Yadkin and Pedee rivers, in the eastern portion of the Carolinas. The grandfather Thomas Waul —or Wall, as the family records show the name to have been spelled—established himself in the Santee district. He intermarried with Miss Anna Mulcahy, the daughter of a prominent planter of the State.

General Thomas Neville Waul was born near Statesburg on January 5, 1815 —the sole issue of the marriage, and the sole remaining descendant of the Carolina Wauls. He had the misfortune to lose his mother during his infancy. His ancestors were remarkable for their patriotism, a trait which has been perpetuated in their offspring. The grandfathers of General Waul, on both sides, took an active part in the Revolutionary struggle, and at its conclusion settled on the hills of Santee, near neighbors of their old commander General Sumpter, widely known as the "Game Cock of the South."

Thomas entered the South Carolina College in Columbia, but left in 1832 without graduating, owing to feeble health and straightened circumstances, incident upon the death of his father. In this connection an act of the generous invalid should be related. Though without means, and in a condition that required them, he refused to receive any portion of his father's little property, but unselfishly gave it to his stepmother, as only adequate to her support, and as a testimonial of his gratitude for her affection. He had at an early age selected the profession of law as a pursuit, and he now determined to seek a place, and the means for acquiring it. His horse, and the contents of his valise, constituted his earthly possessions. With these, and a brave heart, he traveled through upper Georgia into Alabama, and halted at Florence. In a brief time he received the compliment of election as principal of Florence male academy, although but seventeen years of age. Here he taught one session, but becoming impatient to

pursue his chosen profession he relinquished the position of principal, and with high testimonials from the trustees proceeded to Vicksburg, Mississippi. There he became acquainted with S. S. Prentiss. That distinguished man was at the time young, and had not developed the capacity which afterward made him so famous. But his brilliant genius, even then, caused him to tower above his fellows, as did Saul among the prophets. Young Waul naturally was captivated by his magnetic power and engaging eloquence. The esteem was mutual, and at the invitation of Prentiss the young aspirant for judicial knowledge became a student in his office, received the advantage of his training, and enjoyed the warm friendship of that remarkable man through life.

Young Waul made rapid progress in his profession, was licensed in 1835 by the Supreme Court of Mississippi, before his majority, and was appointed District Attorney for the river district, including in its limits Natchez, Vicksburg, and some of the principal counties of the State. He resided a short time in Yazoo City, and thence removed to Grenada. About this time he was married to Miss Mary Simmons, a highly cultured and accomplished young lady of Georgia. He now followed his profession with so much ardor and success that in a few years he was enabled to abandon the general practice, and to confine himself to business in the Fedderal Chancery and Court of Appeals, and to special engagements in important cases. Having at length acquired by his efforts sufficient fortune to justify some degree of respite from his severe toil, he removed to Texas, and established a rural home on the Guadaloupe, in Gonzales county. He had interests of importance, however, in Mississippi that frequently required his presence there, and hence he temporarily established himself in New Orleans. There he obtained a license from the Supreme Court of that State, and practiced again his profession with his accustomed success. But the pursuit of law alone did not wholly employ his time. Being fond of discussion, an ardent admirer of Calhoun, a thorough Democrat of the school of States Rights and a strict construction of the Constitution, he took part in all public debates whenever his peculiar views were assailed. The independence of his position, and particularly so of his character, placed his advocacy always above the suspicion of ambitious designs. He enjoyed a reputation upon the hustings for earnestness uninspired by personal aims, and for a vigor of presentation which gave him a commanding influence. During his long residence in Mississippi and Louisiana he was never a candidate for a political office. The organization and the aggressive march of the Know Nothing party called him from his life of comparative repose on the Guadaloupe. He found much of the ability, and many of the leaders of the Democratic party, the strongest supporters of the new movement. He immediately attacked the principles and practices of that organization, sought its champions upon every battle ground, and invited controversy on the hustings with all who upheld its dangerous doctrines. The triumphs of the Democracy, through his able assistance, made him upon its reorganization the appropriate candidate for Congress in 1859, with Hon. A. J. Hamilton as his opponent. They canvassed together the western district, attracting great numbers, and inspiring unprecedented enthusiasnr. Though the Democracy sustained defeat from the opposition, headed as it was by the great name of General Houston, they had cause to be proud of their champion in the contest. Afterward General Waul was put forward as one of the electors of the State at large on the

Breckenridge ticket, in which capacity he discharged his duty with fidelity and ability, wisely predicting the coming storm. He demonstrated the importance of the united South as the only means of averting impending war. Whatever may be the fact of the unlawfulness of Secession, he felt, and so argued, that it could not, as to some of the States, be averted. In case of war Texas could not remain inactive against a united and aggressive North. There was a hope that this aggression might be obviated by the display of a united South. He therefore invoked this union as a measure of patriotism, disregarding on his part, and asking others to sink, all party issues. The people did as they were desired, but war was not averted; still, it was doubtless owing to these masterly appeals that the great majority of bitter opponents of Secession joined the cause of the South when coercion was attempted. The State having seceded, General Waul was sent to the Provisional Congress at Montgomery, and with his usual sagacity urged upon that body the necessity of adequate preparation for a struggle, as the most effective method of securing a satisfactory arrangement between the sections, or if necessary to fight, for an honorable peace. Before his term of service expired it was obvious that an amicable adjustment was impossible. He declined re-election, being resolved to take the field. He succeeded in raising over two thousand troops. They were organized as "Waul's Legion," went into camp in Washington county, and proceeded thence to Vicksburg and Corinth, where Federal and Confederate troops were being concentrated. At Holly Springs he heard of the defeat of the Confederate forces, and was ordered to the rear of the defeated army to protect and cover its retreat. Thenceforth the Legion, under the command of General Waul, was actively engaged in the conflicts of war. Its valor and discipline made its name a household word in Southern homes, never to be forgotten. General Waul's accurate knowledge of the topography of Mississippi enabled him to render effective service in defense of the State. He urged the importance of defending Yazoo Pass, and though engineers had reported that an entrance through that channel was impossible, his views were adopted by the Government, and at the instance of the President, and by the wish of General Pemberton, he was ordered to the defense of the Yazoo and Tallahatchie rivers. The commanding general requested him to make his selection of troops in the field to aid the Legion in this responsible undertaking. His choice fell upon the Second Texas, commanded by Colonel Ashbel Smith, whose gallantry had been illustrated in many engagements. General Waul proceeded to a strategic point near the confluence of the Tallabusha and Tallahatchie rivers, where he quickly erected a fortification of the South's great staple.

The Federal General Ross, with troops and gunboats, had already entered the Pass, and was approaching with a well appointed land and naval force. But the narrowness of the river and the want of knowledge of the channel somewhat retarded the Federal advance, while the Confederates toiled in the mud through the night to complete their works. Simultaneously with the dawn of morning the Federal fleet appeared, and the fortification received its last and only large gun. Notwithstanding the heavy armament and superior force of the Federals they were defeated, and for a time Vicksburg and the Mississippi were saved to the Confederates. General Loring arrived on the eve of the engagement, but in his report of the battle truthfully gave the credit of the victory to the brave Texans and their commander. At the siege of Vicksburg General Waul's command did active service in the trenches, their presence

being required to repel every attack along the lines. They suffered greatly in loss of officers and men during the siege, but there, as elsewhere, sustained the high reputation achieved by Texas valor on every battle field of the war. After the surrender of Vicksburg General Waul was ordered to Richmond, and was promoted for gallant service in the field to the rank of Brigadier General. He was then sent to Texas to recruit his Legion to the full complement of regiments, and to organize the command into a brigade of cavalry, and report for duty in the cis-Mississippi department. Before the orders could be executed General Banks appeared with a force to invade Texas. General Kirby Smith, commanding the department of the trans-Mississippi, offered General Waul the command of one of his best brigades. He accepted, and led it at the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, in both of which he bore an active and conspicuous part. When the division commander, General Walker, was wounded, General Waul was placed in command of the division, and was subsequently placed in command of the field by General Taylor for personal gallantry, and the military skill displayed in the successful massing of the troops. General Waul took an active part in the battle of Saline, or Jenkins' Ferry, which, on account of the mud rendering the use of artillery impossible, was fought exclusively with muskets and bayonets. The Federals were driven from the field, but the severest losses were sustained by the Texas troops. Of their three generals, two were killed, and General Waul was severely wounded, while some twenty other general commanding officers escaped unhurt. The war soon ended, and General Waul returned to his home on the Guadaloupe. In 1865, against his opposition and protests, he was elected to the Reconstruction Convention. In obedience solely to a sense of duty, he accepted the responsible position, and employed every influence to secure a constitutional recognition of the rights of the people of Texas, and allay sectional animosity. His course in the Convention, brave and wise, was warmly supported by friends, and respected by political foes. Without regarding Southern submission as a disgrace, and with no tinge of petulance or irritability at the settlement of issues by the sword, he urged reciprocal compromises, and a guaranty of the inalienable rights of the vanquished in justifiable war, as the only means of securely establishing sectional peace and national prosperity.

Having lost his material possessions by the war, General Waul resumed the practice of law, which he had abandoned, and located in Galveston. His talent and devotion to business secured a lucrative practice, and placed him in the front rank of active practitioners. He was soon called by the profession to the presidency of the Bar Association, over which he has since presided. His practice, from choice, is chiefly in commercial and admiralty matters, and in Federal and Supreme Courts, in cases involving large transactions, but he is intimately familiar with the principles and practice of all divisions of the law. His intuitive good judgment, and the unsparing pains bestowed upon his cases, fully account for his unvarying success at every epoch of his life. Though a profound lawyer, he has found time to devote to the amenities of literature, as well as to the researches of science and philosophy. For intellectual accomplishments, and breadth of culture, he is without a superior in the State. His personal, like his mental characteristics, are strongly defined. With every attribute of moral and physical courage, of the most undaunted character, is mingled justice and generosity, while thought and act are subordinate to a sense of duty, to which personal feelings and interests are ever sacrificed. Exalted obedience to duty

has marked his whole course and guided his every act, whether citizen or soldier. General Waul is a consistent member of the Baptist church; has no political ambitions; is faithful to his clients, and devoted to his friends. He has a great deal of common sense, allied to perfect candor, and enjoys that merited tribute of esteem which his talents, knightly character, and high bred courtesy have never failed to secure.

General Waul is an accomplished botanist, and spends his leisure moments among the indigenous plants that adorn his garden. His home is an elegant and hospitable retreat, where courtly manners and womanly grace preside over the amenities of life.